Chicago Metro History Fair
Rule Book
Welcome

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a journey of historical inquiry—the Chicago Metro History Fair. Each year, more than 15,000 Chicago metro area students complete papers, websites, documentaries, exhibits, and performances on topics of their choice for History Fair. Just like your counterparts in National History Day (NHD) programs around the world, you will conduct historical research, craft a historical argument based on evidence, and share it through your final project. If you choose a topic that is interesting and important to you, then you will have fun researching and developing your project. Participating in History Fair will help you become a better researcher, critical thinker, and communicator of your ideas. You will become better prepared for college and for life.

In order to recognize students’ hard work and achievements, the Chicago Metro History Fair coordinates a series of contests where students’ final projects are shared with the public. History Fair students in grades 6 through 8 participate in the Junior Division; students in grades 9 through 12 participate in the Senior Division. Your project may be selected for display at the regional History Fair competitions, and may even advance to the state or national competitions.

We hope that you enjoy your History Fair experience this year!

—The History Fair Staff

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Rules for All Categories

All History Fair projects must comply with these rules AND the specific rules for each category which follow.

◗ Topics must connect with Chicago or Illinois history in order to advance to the state contest. Non-Illinois topics are only permitted at the regional and finals competitions.

◗ Projects competing to advance to National History Day must connect to Chicago/Illinois history and use the NHD theme.

◗ Projects registered as “NHD eligible” will be assessed on how well their project integrates the NHD theme.

◗ Students may enter only one project each year. Sharing research in multiple projects is not permitted. Revising or reusing an entry from a previous year—whether one’s own or another student’s—will result in disqualification.

◗ Entries submitted for competition must be original and have been researched and developed in the current contest year.

◗ Students are responsible for the research, design, and production of their own project, as well as operating their own equipment and materials, including any narration. Students may receive advice from adults on the mechanical aspects of creating an entry and/or reasonable help necessary for safety, but the work must be completed by students. Materials created by others for use in the entry violate this rule.

◗ Each project is required to have a Summary Statement and Annotated Bibliography. [See “Required Materials” for more details.]

◗ Word counts must be provided for exhibits, websites, and papers. Time lengths must be provided for documentaries and performances.

◗ Plagiarism is unacceptable, and constitutes grounds for disqualification. [See www.plagiarism.org for further guidance.]
Items potentially dangerous in any way—such as weapons, firearms, animals, etc.—are strictly prohibited.

Do not place school name on projects, nor give in interviews.

Interviews: Students should not prepare a formal, verbal presentation; however, they should plan to respond to questions posed by judges. The interviews are important to the History Fair experience, but the entry is judged on its merits alone. Website and paper interviews are optional.

The Fair Use Doctrine allows students to use pre-existing materials (photos, footage, music, etc.) for educational purposes, including student productions like History Fair; therefore, students need not seek formal permissions within the context of the competition. However, if the project is shown in non-educational settings, then permissions should be sought as appropriate.

Teachers may have additional rules/restrictions for the History Fair at individual schools. Students should comply with all rules set by their teacher.

Exhibits, performances, and documentaries will be judged and interviewed at the public competitions. Papers and websites are judged in a separate stream, which may have different deadlines for submission.

Required Materials

All projects must include an Annotated Bibliography and Summary Statement. Bibliographies must follow either the Turabian or MLA style format. Turabian is preferred. In the bibliography, each source should be annotated with a short description of how the student used that source.

The bibliography must be divided between primary sources (sources from the time period or written by someone with firsthand knowledge) and secondary sources (sources written after the time period, typically by a historian).

Students must acknowledge all sources used in the development of the project in the Annotated Bibliography in order to avoid plagiarism.

Include all sources that contributed useful information, perspectives, or visuals. Annotations may explain why students placed the source as primary/secondary if it is not immediately obvious; and, in the case of web sources, note its credibility. Bundle photos or other materials from the same collection into a single citation. Cite oral history transcripts, questionnaires, or other supplementary materials in the bibliography—do not provide copies of them.

The Summary Statement provides the project’s thesis, a summary of the argument, and information about the development of the project. The form is available on the History Fair website.

Except for websites, where the Summary Statement and Annotated Bibliography should be printed on plain, white paper and stapled together and brought to the event with the project. The Annotated Bibliography and Summary Statement are not included in the word count.

Papers

A History Fair paper is a traditional research paper offering a historical argument with supporting evidence.

Paper Rules

Papers are written only by individuals, not groups.

Papers are 1,500-2,500 words in length. Please note that all words or numbers in the text body count toward the word limit. This includes student-composed text as well as quotations. The word limit does not apply to citations, Summary Statement, the Annotated Bibliography, illustration credits, and appendix material. The word count must be provided on the paper’s title page.
Citations must be included as either endnotes, footnotes, or parenthetical citations. Citations should be provided for paraphrased ideas, as well as direct quotations. Both Turabian and MLA styles are acceptable, but Turabian is preferred. Whatever style is selected, be consistent.

Papers are printed (one-sided) on plain white 8.5 x 11 inch paper with one-inch margins on all sides and page numbers. Use 10 or 12 point font and double-space text in the body of the paper.

Submit two complete sets to the History Fair office by the contest deadline. Electronically submitted papers are not accepted.

See also: “Rules for All Categories” on p. 3.

Each set submitted to the History Fair office for judging includes the following, stapled together (no binders):

1. Title page with project title, name, division, category, and word count
2. Summary Statement
3. Research paper (text body)
4. Proper citations (footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations)
5. Appendix material (optional)
6. Annotated Bibliography

Paper Guidelines

[See "HF Project Guides” → “Research Papers” on the History Fair website for further guidance. And examples.]

Appendices are allowed but not required. If included, appendix material must be referred to within the text of the paper. Use of appendices should be very limited and may include photographs, maps, charts, and/or graphs that are needed to provide evidence or explanation for a point made in the paper. Oral history transcripts, correspondence, questionnaires, and other primary/secondary materials should be cited in the bibliography but are not typically included as appendices. Do not send original sources.

If images are used within the paper or an appendix, the words on analytical captions count, but brief source credits do not.

The judging process for research papers follows a different evaluation schedule than other History Fair projects and interviews are optional.

Exhibits

Like exhibits in history museums, History Fair exhibits present a visual and textual interpretation using a combination of student-composed text, quotations, and strong visuals. The project must strike a balance between substantive, brief interpretive text and the visual evidence needed to support the student’s ideas.

Exhibit Rules

Exhibits are created by individuals or groups of no more than five students.

Size limitations: 6 feet high x 40 inches wide x 30 inches deep.

Measurement of the exhibit includes any supplemental materials you incorporate. So long as the exhibit fits within the required dimensions, it may be constructed in any shape. Circular or rotating exhibits or those meant to be viewed from all sides must be no more than 30 inches in diameter.
Maximum Dimensions for History Fair Exhibits

- 72 inches tall
- 40 inches wide
- 30 inches depth

- Exhibits must be free standing.
- Media devices (e.g. DVD players, tablets, mp3 players, etc.) used in an exhibit must be limited to a total of no more than three minutes. Viewers and judges must be able to control media devices.
- Students must provide a brief source credit on the exhibit board for displayed visuals/quotations/material (for example, “Jane Addams, 1908, Hull-House Museum”), with a full citation provided in the bibliography.
- The exhibit’s student-composed word count must be provided on the Summary Statement. This includes the text that students write for titles, subheadings, labels, analytical/explanatory captions, graphs, timelines, media devices, or supplemental materials (e.g. photo albums, scrapbooks, etc.). Brief source credits do not count.
- See also: “Rules for All Categories” on p. 3.

Exhibit Competition Notes

Please bring three copies of the following materials to the contest along with the exhibit:
- Summary Statement
- Annotated Bibliography (see pp. 4-5)

Exhibit Penalty Points (High School only)

High school exhibits that violate the rules will be subject to penalty point deductions. Junior Division exhibits will not receive separate penalties.

- Exceeds size limits: Minus 3 points
- No Summary Statement: Minus 10 points
- Bibliography not annotated: Minus 5 points
- No bibliography: 0 points in source category

Written materials should be printed on plain white paper and stapled together (no binders). Place the written materials in front of the exhibit. Judges will ask to keep at least one copy of the project’s written materials. Exhibit students are interviewed at the competition following judging. History Fair is not responsible for media equipment or artifacts that are lost or damaged in the course of History Fair; students are responsible for the safety and security of their displays.

Exhibit Guidelines

[See “HF Project Guides” ➔ “Exhibits” on the History Fair website for further guidance and examples.]

- While the History Fair does not observe a formal word limit for exhibits, the program urges students to keep their interpretation concise as brevity is both a good skill for students to learn and best practice for exhibits. History Fair exhibits should not look a “research paper on a board.” Consider using 1,000–2,000 student-composed words.
- Exhibits should have a logical flow: People reading the display should know where to begin and end, and in what order they should read the text and view the evidence. Use of clearly defined subheadings to guide the reader is highly encouraged.
 Exhibits should use visual evidence such as photographs, cartoons, maps, and graphs. Quotations, both from primary and secondary sources, are also acceptable forms of evidence, but should be used strategically.

 There are different types of exhibit text:

 ◆ **Subheadings** identify the major sections of the exhibit and help the viewer understand how to navigate the display.

 ◆ **Labels** synthesize multiple pieces of historical evidence to present the historical interpretation for a particular section of an exhibit. Labels are typically 50-75 words, supported by 3-5 pieces of historical evidence drawn from primary and secondary sources.

 ◆ Labels are preceded and followed by a longer **introduction** (with a thesis) and a **conclusion**.

 ◆ **Captions** are usually shorter and may analyze a single source. Avoid heavy use of captions that begin with “This is an image of...” Instead, students should focus on their ideas and argument and let the visuals stand as evidence for the project’s claims.

 ◆ **Credits** are brief and identify (as opposed to analyze or explain) the source of an image or quote (e.g. “Jane Addams, 1908, Hull-House Museum”).

 ◆ Timelines help sequence events but have limited effectiveness for conveying knowledge and analysis. While they are helpful to students during the research phase, timelines are **not** required nor encouraged as a component of the exhibit.

 ◆ Exhibits are evaluated based on the historical quality of the display, the Summary Statement, and Annotated Bibliography. Supplemental models, artifacts, binders, electronic devices, and other supporting materials should only be used when they forward the project’s historical interpretation. Extravagant elements neither enhance nor detract from a project’s overall evaluation.

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**Documentaries**

**Documentaries allow students to communicate an argument through a script and support it with visual evidence drawn from primary and secondary sources. To produce a documentary, students must have access to editing equipment and be able to operate it.**

**Documentary Rules**

 ◆ **Documentaries** are created by individuals or groups of no more than five students.

 ◆ **Documentaries** may not exceed ten minutes in length. Time begins when the first image or sound appears and ends after the last visual/sound concludes. The length of the documentary must be provided on the Summary Statement.

 ◆ **Documentaries** must be researched, created, narrated, and produced by the students registered (e.g. no external narrators). Students must operate all equipment used in the production of the project. Only those students listed as entrants may participate in the documentary’s production.

 ◆ **Students may use pre-existing photographs, video excerpts, music, etc. in their film with proper acknowledgment in the credits and Annotated Bibliography. However, students may not use material created by others specifically for their History Fair project (for example, an adult could not craft a musical or visual piece specifically to be used in the student’s project; “actors” should not provide dramatization).**

 ◆ **Documentaries conclude with a brief list of credits for major audio and visual sources only, not full citations. The Annotated Bibliography and Summary Statement must be printed for the judges and do not appear on the documentary. All sources used in the documentary must be properly cited in the bibliography.**
Documentaries are self-running. Live narration and other comments before or during the project are not permitted. PowerPoint projects, podcasts, and “performances on film” are not appropriate in the documentary category.

Students are allowed five minutes to set up and five minutes to remove equipment. Students should operate the equipment independently. Adults should not assist with set up of equipment. Students should use set-up time to prepare the documentary for presentation (adjust volume, etc.).

Students must properly “burn” or save the documentary so that it can play on any machine (see below for more details).

See also: “Rules for All Categories” on p. 3.

**DOCUMENTARY PENALTY POINTS**

*(High School only)*

*High School documentaries that violate the rules will be subject to penalty point deductions. Junior Division documentaries will not receive separate penalties.*

- Exceeds time limit: Minus 2 points for exceeding ten minutes, plus 2 points for each full minute thereafter (10 point maximum penalty)
- Bibliography not annotated: Minus 5 points
- No Summary Statement: Minus 10 points
- No bibliography: 0 points in the sources category

**Documentary Competition Notes**

All documentaries will be judged from DVDs or USB Flash drives. It is recommended that students bring copies on both media for judging. Consider testing it on a variety of machines before the contest.

The best final format for a documentary is a DVD. MP4, AVI, or WMV file, published and burned to a DVD. On Flash drives, the movie should be saved—not the individual files. Students may bring their own computers to the contest (if Apple laptops or tablets are brought, students are responsible for bringing their own adapter for the projector).

Please bring **three copies** of the following materials to the contest along with the documentary:

- Summary Statement
- Annotated Bibliography, (see pp. 4-5)

Students may be asked to leave a copy of their documentary with the judges for History Fair purposes, but it is not required—please label it with title and/or student names.

Written materials should be printed on plain white paper and stapled together (no binders). Judges will ask to keep at least one copy of the written materials. The presentation concludes with a brief interview with the judges.

**Documentary Guidelines**

*[See “HF Project Guides” → “Documentaries” on the History Fair website for further guidance and examples.]*

- Spend time watching and analyzing documentaries, such as those available on PBS. Pay attention to the elements, narrative, and structure of these documentaries to see how the professionals successfully communicate their ideas through this medium.

- A documentary uses visual evidence such as photographs, maps, film clips, interviews, and other graphic images. Subtitles, quotations, and other highlights are appropriate, but the presentation should not rely heavily on printed text. While technical and creative quality are important, they do not outweigh the need for solid historical knowledge and analysis.

- Clips from existing documentaries should be used sparingly. Overuse or long segments of footage from a professional production are discouraged. Most importantly, History Fair documentaries should present students’ own interpretations.
Audio can be a mix of student narration, interviews, and music. Speak at a steady pace. Soundtracks are best when relevant to content and volume does not distract from the voiceover. When using interviews that are hard to understand, consider subtitles. Ask different people to listen to the documentary to make sure all types of people can understand the narration so that adjustments may be made before the final version.

There are no specific penalties for being under 10 minutes in length. If the documentary is significantly shorter, however, the judges may determine that the project needed more knowledge and analysis.

Performances

Performances allow students to communicate their ideas through a short dramatic and/or humorous play of their own creation. Performances can be an excellent match for students who like to express their ideas verbally.

Performance Rules

Performances are created by individuals or groups of no more than five students. Only those students listed as entrants may participate in the production.

Performances may not exceed ten minutes. The length of the performance must be provided on the Summary Statement.

Dramatic performances and props/scenery must be created and performed entirely by the students registered.

Students are allowed five minutes to set up and five minutes to remove props. Students should operate all equipment independently. Adults should not assist with set up of props unless necessary for safety.

Use of audiovisual equipment within the performance is permitted. Students must provide and run all audiovisual enhancements independently. Remember: the student’s own analysis and interpretation should take precedence, not fancy effects.

[See also: “Rules for All Categories” on p. 3]

Performance Competition Notes

Performance students perform their plays live at the competition. When presenting at competition, students should announce only their name(s) and title of their project (not school) prior to performing.

Please bring three copies of the following materials to the contest:

- Summary Statement
- Annotated Bibliography, (see pp. 4-5)

Written materials should be printed on plain white paper and stapled together (no binders). Judges will ask to keep at least one copy of the written materials. Performances are followed by a brief interview with the judges.
Performance Guidelines

[See “HF Project Guides”  “Performances” on the History Fair website for further guidance and examples.]

✧ A performance should clearly state a thesis and develop an argument just as any other category. The script should integrate or allude to historical evidence drawn from sources. Theatrical quality is important but, at the same time, historical analysis and interpretation outweigh dramatic flair. History Fair strongly recommends that students seek their History Fair advisor’s feedback on the historical knowledge and analysis in the draft script before committing to memorization.

✧ There are no penalties for being under 10 minutes in length. If the performance is significantly shorter, however, the judges may determine that the project needed more knowledge and analysis.

Websites

The website category is the most interactive History Fair category. Using the NHD Website Editor platform, students build a series of interconnected web pages that convey a historical argument supported by multimedia evidence. Students need consistent access to a computer with an Internet connection to complete a History Fair website.

Website Rules

✧ Websites are created by individuals or groups of no more than five students.

✧ All entries must be constructed through the NHD Website Builder or they will NOT be eligible to participate in History Fair. The URL must begin with eight numbers followed by “nhd.weebly.com.” (for example, http://12345678.nhd.weebly.com).

✧ Website entries may contain no more than 1,500 student-composed words. Students must state the number of student-composed words on the home page.

✧ The following do not count toward the word limit: quotations; brief credits identifying the source of visuals or quotations; recurring menus, titles, and navigation instructions; required word count notification; words within primary documents and artifacts, and the Summary Statement and Annotated Bibliography. All other text written by students, including explanatory or analytical captions, do count.

✧ The Summary Statement and Annotated Bibliography must be posted on the website, in a tab for Student Materials (or Reference). Post as PDFS—do not use Google Drive.

✧ Students may use pre-existing photos, videos, music, etc., within the site with proper credit (such as, “Photo from Addie Wyatt Papers, Harsh Collection, Chicago Public Library”). Using images or content created by others for specific use in your entry violates this rule. For example, using a graphic that others produced at your request is not permitted.

✧ Students must operate all equipment (computers, cameras, etc.) and software (NHD Website Builder, photo or video editing software, etc.) used in the development of the website. Students may receive help and advice from others on the mechanical aspects of creating an entry, but the work must be the students’ own.
The first page of the site serves as the “home page.” It must include the student name(s), entry title, division, number of student-composed words, and the main menu. Including the thesis or a short introduction on the home page is recommended, but not required.

The website may contain multimedia clips (audio, visual, or both) that total no more than four minutes (i.e. use one four-minute clip, four one-minute clips, etc.). Music is included in the four-minute total. Students may record quotations and primary source materials for dramatic effect, but may not narrate their own content.

Do not link to external websites, except for software plug-ins. If students use any media that requires a specific software to view (e.g. Flash, QuickTime, RealPlayer), they must provide a link to an Internet site where the software is available as a free, secure, and legal download.

The entire site, including all media, must be no more than 100 MB.

The content and appearance of a page cannot change when the page is refreshed in the browser. Random text or image generators are not allowed. Pages must be interconnected with hyperlinks. Automatic redirects are not permitted.

Crediting sources: All quotations from written sources, visuals, and closely paraphrased accounts must be credited within the website. Brief, source credits (for example, “Jane Addams, 1908”) do not count toward the student-composed word limit. All sources must be completely, properly cited in the Annotated Bibliography.

The pages that comprise the site must be viewable in a standard web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Chrome). Students are responsible for ensuring that the entry is viewable in multiple web browsers.

See also: “Rules for All Categories” on p. 3.

The following materials should be posted on the website under a navigational tab titled “References.” Post these files as PDF files—do not use Google Drive or Scribd.

- Summary Statement
- Annotated Bibliography, (see pp. 4-5)

WEBSITE PENALTY POINTS

(High School only)

High School websites that violate the rules will be subject to penalty point deductions. Junior Division websites will not receive separate penalties.

- Exceeds student-composed word limit: Minus 2 points for each 100 words beyond 1,500 (10 point maximum penalty)
- Exceeds multimedia time limit: Minus 1 point for each 15 seconds over (10 point maximum penalty)
- Links to sites outside the website: Minus 5 points per site (Exceptions: Plug-ins — Flash, QuickTime, etc. — that one must download to view website content)
- No Summary Statement: Minus 10 points
- Bibliography not annotated: Minus 5 points
- No bibliography: 0 points in the sources category

- Preview the website on several different computers and in several different browsers to make sure it can be viewed by the judges.

Website Competition Notes

- Projects that are not created within the NHD Website Builder will be disqualified. Teachers must submit the URL, student email address, username, and password for each project advancing to the History Fair by the registration deadline or the website may not be judged.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT! When students have completed the website, make sure that to hit PUBLISH to ensure that your most recent revisions are visible to the viewer. (The students may see saved changes on the screen, but they are not visible to the viewer until it is published.)

- Students will be blocked from editing their site during judging. It will reopen after judging is complete to allow advancing projects an opportunity for revision.
Website Guidelines

[See “HF Project Guides” → “Websites,” and “Digi-telling History” on the History Fair website for further guidance and examples.]

✧ History Fair websites should be interactive. Consider integrating clips from a variety of media (video footage, interview excerpts, etc.), pop-ups that permit detailed viewing of sources, music, interactive timelines or maps, etc. Remember: interactive features should enhance your historical argument, not distract from it.

✧ Students should not hide the thesis and introduction. The home page is the first encounter that judges have with the project. The home page should provide a “road map” for the project by introducing the argument.

✧ Student-composed text should offer a historical interpretation or argument. Quotations, visuals, and multimedia elements are evidence for the argument you are trying to convey.

✧ Spend time considering the overall organization of the website and how to best construct the navigational menu. Organize on paper before touching a keyboard.

How is my project evaluated?

Student projects are given a numerical score by multiple judges. Following a judging orientation and using a common evaluation rubric, these volunteers will assess student work on the quality of the project’s Historical Knowledge, Analysis, Source Material, and Presentation. Judges confer with each other before scoring the projects. Judges are encouraged to provide substantive written comments to help students understand what they might improve in the future. Students who advance in the competition will be given an opportunity to revise their projects.

History Fair Judging Criteria

Historical Knowledge (30% Senior Division; 35% Junior Division)

✧ Is the project historically accurate? Are the facts gathered by the student appropriate and relevant to the thesis, demonstrating a mastery of historical content on this topic?

✧ Does the project demonstrate an extensive use of knowledge? Is the information presented thorough and balanced?

✧ Is the conclusion based on historical research? Did most of the events described in the project take place at least 25 years ago?

✧ Does the project place the topic into historical context?

Analysis (30% Senior Division; 25% Junior Division)

✧ Does the project clearly present a historical argument with a thesis and evidence?

✧ Does the project begin with a question or problem and proceed to find an answer, make a point, and draw a conclusion?

✧ Does the project demonstrate change over time or cause and effect?

✧ Is the impact or historical significance of the topic clearly demonstrated?

✧ Has the student related local history to larger historical themes or made a link to state, national, or world history?
Does the project go beyond a collection of facts and show evidence of analysis or interpretation?

Quality of Source Material (20%)

Has the student used a depth, range, and variety of primary and secondary sources to address the question/problem posed by the thesis?

Is it evident that the sources in the bibliography have actually been used in the project?

What is the quality of the sources? Is there heavy and unnecessary reliance on Internet sources? Is there evidence that the student has evaluated the credibility of the Internet source?

Quality of Presentation (20%)

Is the project well-organized and coherent? Does the project flow logically from beginning to end?

Does the project tell a story (have a narrative structure)?

Does the project use the category medium effectively?

Does the physical appearance show attention to detail in terms of neatness, proofreading, subheadings?

Does the project reflect creativity and imagination without relying on elaborate or expensive ornamentation?

Integration of the National History Day (NHD) Theme

Judges will also assess the degree to which students integrate the annual NHD theme into the analysis presented in their project. Judges will evaluate the project’s use of the theme as superior, excellent, good, or not applicable.

The Chicago Metro History Fair and Illinois History Day rules align with NHD on most points. However, there are a few differences that those projects selected to go to NHD will need to address.

[Available at www.chicagohistoryfair.org]